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Before Disney Arrived: Florida's Ill-Fated Attempt to Build INTERAMA

by Michael Hoover

Miami, Florida, has long been considered a Western hemispheric hub; Pan-American Airways, for example, began advertising the city as the "Gateway to the Americas" in the early 1930s. By mid-20th century, some 600,000 people traveling to and from Latin America passed through Miami each year, encouraging the city's Chamber of Commerce to organize a series of inter-American business meetings during the 1950s. The Chamber also waged a battle at that time to abolish a federal tax levied on travelers to the Caribbean and Central America.¹ Thereafter, several decades of political turmoil in the region figuratively and literally latinized Miami, most visibly through entry of a half million Cubans. In the mid-1990s, thirty-four nations meeting in the city at the Summit of the Americas, proposed a plan to realize a hemispheric free trade area. In 2003 the heads of government and ministers of state of those same countries returned to

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1. The travel tax to the Caribbean and Central America was considered discriminatory given that a similar tax on travel to Asia, Europe, and Latin American had already been lifted. Taxing travel to the Caribbean and Central America had apparently been retained because of concerns that certain Florida businesses had about "cheap travel" to the region. Robert M. Hallett, "Miami Acquires an Accent," *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 March 1955.

finalize a draft of that agreement. A year later, two quite different events offered evidence of the city's international stature. First, FedEx unveiled a new Miami facility called the Gateway Hub designed to significantly boost the company's activity in Latin America and the Caribbean. Secondly, Miami hosted the 2004 MTV music awards show at which Jennifer Lopez declared the city the party capital of the United States and proclaimed it "the steamiest, sexiest city in the world."²

Historically, two features characterize Miami's existence: relentless boosterism and Caribe-Latin influences. The pair merged, perhaps for the first time, when indefatigable promoter and three-time mayor Ev Sewell campaigned for a Pan-American trade mart in the late 1920s.³ Notwithstanding the Great Depression several years later, Pan-Am was providing regular passenger service between Miami and Havana, Cuba, by 1931. With air travel boding well for lucrative business ties to the island and locales further south, Sewell's successor, real estate mogul Clifford Reeder, gathered together a group of developers to push for a hemispheric park to be located in Miami. Nothing came from this effort although President Franklin Roosevelt offered his encouragement; interest in such a venture re-emerged just as World War II began and further delayed the idea. Then, in 1949, an organizing committee of twenty individuals was established to study the feasibility of the project and work on proposals for a cultural and economic exchange center. Members of Florida's congressional delegation began pursuing federal funds for the project a year later. The year 1950 also witnessed a unanimous joint resolution from the U.S. Congress backing such a project and a statement of support from President Harry Truman. Finally, in 1951, the Florida legislature created the Inter-American Center Authority (IACA), constituting it as a public corporate agency for the purpose of planning, financing constructing, operating, and maintaining an international commercial, cultural, and educational exposition in Miami. Prefiguring Disney's EPCOT by a quarter century, this permanent bazaar, combining the features of an amusement park, world's fair, and trade show, was to be called INTERAMA.

2. Tamara Lush, "Survival of the Sexiest," *St. Petersburg Times*, 26 April 2005.

3. One newspaper account states that the idea of an Interama-style park has been traced to 1918 but the author does provide any specific information. Haines Colbert, "Interama's Big Step," *The Miami Herald*, 15 November 1964.

The Authority's twenty-five year existence consisted of a series of mistakes, missteps, and miscalculations (not to mention misperceptions and some bad breaks). In the end, INTERAMA was never built, its slated 1958 opening periodically pushed back, the last time to 1976 (on July 4th no less, coinciding with the bicentennial of the writing of the Declaration of Independence). Budgeted at a cost of \$70,000,000 in 1955, the INTERAMA price tag rose to \$500 million dollars by the mid-1960s, an estimated outlay that was trimmed—along with the scope and size of the park itself—to under \$100 million in the project's dying 1970s days. When state legislators in Tallahassee abolished the IACA as an operational entity of Florida's government in 1975, they eliminated further consideration. Today, INTERAMA "stands" as an example of the "planned but never built" Florida tourist attractions that Robert Brown calls "Never-Never Lands."⁴

Phase I: 1950s

Miami was the winter resort of choice for the eastern U.S. in the years immediately following World War II, its reputation aided by popular entertainers such as Jackie Gleason and Arthur Godfrey who promoted the place in live performances as well as on radio and early television. Travelers to the area visited many long-established tourist attractions such as Parrot Jungle, Monkey Jungle, Lost Lake and Coral Caverns, Seaquarium, and the Miami Serpenterium.⁵ Alluring as well was the city's seamier side—gaming parlors, poolside bookies, risqué dance shows—and its location as a bridge to Havana where U.S. mobsters in cahoots with the Cuban government constructed and ran extravagant casinos and hotels. Meanwhile, the post-war U.S. "economic miracle" had begun by the early 1950s and Florida's sunshine and beaches made it well-suited for a culture of travel and recreation. One effect, tourism, dating to the building of a coastal railroad and hotels in

4. Robert Brown, *Florida's Lost Tourist Attractions*. <http://www.lostparks.com/never.html>.

5. For discussions of mid-20th century Miami tourism, see Helen Muir, *Miami, USA* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953); Ken Breslauer, *Roadside Paradise: The Golden Age of Florida's Tourist Attraction, 1929-1971* (St. Petersburg: RetroFlorida, 2000); Cory Gittner, *Miami's Parrot Jungle and Gardens: The Colorful History of an Uncommon Attraction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000). Gittner (as the title of his book suggests) examines in detail a single attraction that bucked the trend toward high-tech, capital-intensive self-contained parks and still survives as a mom-and-pop operation.

the late 19th century, would become a year-round industry for the state.⁶ Consequently, the vacation trade supplanted agriculture as Florida's leading revenue producer. Unlike the 1920s boom that left many of the state's Old South traditions comparatively untouched mid-century developments ushered in an era of ongoing socio-economic change. Thus, the Florida legislature's 1951 decision to create the Inter-American Center Authority may not have been a coincidence as it followed an unprecedented 4.5 million visits to the state, including some 250,000 Latin Americans.

The IACA's pre-incorporation organizing committee built considerable support for the project prior to the Authority's creation, holding public hearings in South Florida, Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and the Tampa-St Petersburg area. The committee won the endorsement of both the state's Chamber of Commerce and the League of Florida Municipalities. Convinced of the potential economic benefit for their states, the governors of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina gave their backing to such a center. The committee also enlisted the help of U.S. Senator Spessard Holland who highlighted for lawmakers in Washington, D.C. the role that a hemispheric center could play in strengthening U.S. ties with Latin America. Dr. William Walker, the Authority's first chairperson, would later maintain that favorable opinion was practically unanimous and that no organized opposition arose, although he acknowledged that there were some who considered the effort too costly for the state to finance.⁷

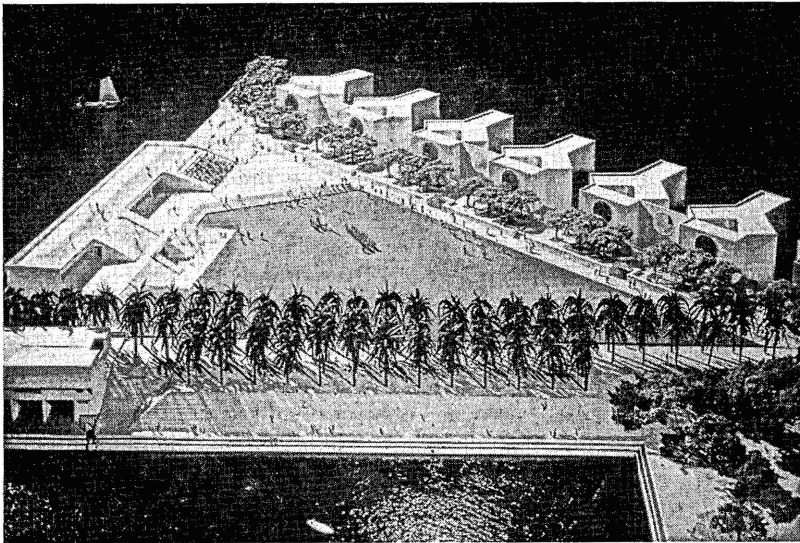
6. For a discussion of mid-twentieth century Florida tourism, see Gary Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005). Mormino notes that Florida inn keepers began installing air conditioners in the early 1950s and that by mid-decade every Miami Beach hotel was air conditioned. Prior to this time, Florida old-timers referred to the months of June, July, and August when there was little business to be had as the "three brothers of summer."
7. Dr. W. H. Walker, Chairman, Inter-American Center Authority, "Letter to Governor LeRoy Collins and Members of the Cabinet," 25 September 1956, Inter-American Center Authority, Correspondence 1955-1963, S 489. Florida State Archives, R. A. Gray Building, Tallahassee, Florida. Walker renewed the campaign for an Inter-American "meeting place" in the immediate post-World War period. A former University of Pittsburgh professor, he had obtained the first savings and loan charter after Congress passed the Savings and Loan Act in the 1930s. Walker established the First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Dade County in 1933. Its name was later changed to AmeriFirst. In 1991 AmeriFirst closed because of insolvency. Author's interview with former IACA member Brailey Odham, 2 April 1994.

Governor Fuller Warren appointed the first authority members and officers (none of whom received compensation for their service) in July of 1951. Warren simultaneously requested the pre-incorporation organizing committee continue as a citizens' advisory board that was eventually expanded to include 100 prominent residents throughout the state. By 1951's close, the Miami city commission had conferred upon the Authority 1700 acres of northeast Dade County property that it had acquired some years prior for an airport. Known as Grave's Tract, the city's offer of this Biscayne Bay hammock (the land split by the 163rd Street Causeway) was subject to the IACA raising enough money to build and open an attraction within two years. Optimism soared when Congress unanimously passed, and President Truman signed, legislation calling upon officials and agencies of the federal government to assist and cooperate with the Inter-American Authority as well as inviting all the nations of the Americas to participate in the cultural and trade center.⁸

Unfortunately, the Authority quickly hit the first of many financial snags that would hamper progress on INTERAMA over the course of two-plus decades. Loan negotiations with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), a depression-era creation of Herbert Hoover's administration, bogged down during 1952 amidst a Senate investigation into charges of political cronyism in the agency. Then, Republican control of both congressional chambers as well as the White House following that year's election produced legislation canceling almost all loan applications and abolishing the RFC as an independent agency.⁹ Forced to look elsewhere for financing, the Authority was stymied when the Federal Reserve Board (FRB) employed anti-inflationary "tight money" policies in 1953, increasing the difficulty of procuring money in the bond market. Meanwhile, the city of Miami allowed

8. Authorized by Public Law 853 (81st Congress, 2nd Session), Truman signed the proclamation on 30 January 1952. Among those in attendance were IACA Chair Walker and Florida senators Holland and George A. Smathers. Charles Sawyer Papers, Inter-American Cultural Trade Center, Box 116. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, Independence, Missouri.

9. From "Report of William C. Lantaff, Chairman," Inter-American Center Authority Minutes, 1951-1975, S470. Florida State Archives. Leroy Collins, *Florida Across the Threshold: The Administration of Governor Leroy Collins*, 4 January 1955-3 January 1961 (Tallahassee: State of Florida, 1961), 384. President Dwight Eisenhower's announcement of the RFC's impending closure indicated that the agency would be prohibited from making loans in excess of \$1 million dollars in the intervening time.



Model of the proposed Ceremonial Plaza, INTERAMA, Miami. Photograph provided courtesy of the Historical Museum of South Florida Archives.

the terms of its grant of land to roll over, something that it would do throughout the remainder of the decade.

Two years of underwriting negotiations amidst an improving market produced a 1955 finance plan authorizing Lehman Brothers of New York to sell \$70 million in bonds to fund INTERAMA.¹⁰ In the interim, governor-elect LeRoy Collins toured Latin America in late 1954 to publicize and solicit support for the project.¹¹ Buoyed by a report concluding that the park would be debt-free, self-sustaining, and profitable within six years of operation, the eleven-member board voted unanimously to approve the

10. The financing plan involved creating a new type of public authority revenue bond, one which had two tracks – a larger amount A bond bearing smaller interest (\$43 million at 4%) and a smaller amount B bond bearing higher interest (\$27 million at 5%). Paul Heffernan, “2-Step Bonds Set for Trade Center,” *New York Times*, 12 February 1956.

11. Tom R. Wagy, *Governor LeRoy Collins: Spokesman of the New South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 41. Wagy writes: “Mixing politics with southern hospitality, Collins invited each of the dignitaries who entertained him and his spouse on the tour to attend his inaugural. Much to Collins’s surprise twenty-one Latin Americans, including the wife of the president of Panama, the vice-president of Panama, and numerous ambassadors from other countries, announced their intention to attend the inauguration.”

arrangement. Immediately thereafter, Lehman Brothers' Frank Morse, noting that Walt Disney had found that holding exclusive rights to the name "Disneyland" was a lucrative source of income, recommended that INTERAMA be copyrighted.¹² At the board's next meeting, member Brailey Odham (a resident of Sanford in Central Florida) suggested that the Authority hold an "open meeting" to "acquaint the public with its operations" and a motion to do so was passed.¹³

Amidst much enthusiasm, plans for the project were unveiled to the public and the press on 3 January 1956 at the Biscayne Terrace Hotel in Miami Beach. Holding aloft a publicity brochure, IACA fiscal agent Harry McDonald announced a 1750 acre park in northern Dade County with projected daily attendance of 50,000 people (17.5 million per year). According to McDonald, INTERAMA would be

a clearing house for cultural and for trade expansion, a show for a vast display of scientific and other accomplishments - a meeting place for the people of the Americas.

12. Minutes of the 18 November 1955 board meeting of the Inter-American Cultural Authority. Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes, 1951-1975, S470. Florida State Archives.

13. Minutes of the 2 December 1955 board meeting of the Inter-American Cultural Authority. Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes 1951-1975, S 470. Florida State Archives. Governor LeRoy Collins appointed Brailey Odham to a four-year term on the Inter-American Center Authority in 1955. Sharing the political goal of modernizing Florida government, the two men had established a rapport when third-place finisher Odham threw his active support to Collins in the 1954 gubernatorial run-off election. Upon assuming office, the new government told Odham that he "would want his help in getting the job done." The quoted fragment appeared in a column written by Leroy Collins, *St Petersburg Times*, 19 September 1988. Odham, having pledged to take no state job that would pay him a salary, accepted the IACA appointment. He attended thirteen board meetings during the time that he sat on the board. While he displayed a willingness to defer to members with longer-standing, particularly chairman William Walker, his progressive-populism made him critical of the authority's "closed-door" operations. In expressing concern about the lack of competitive bidding in the letting of engineering contracts as well as the failure to publish statewide news-paper advertisements announcing a bidding period for the printing of bonds, he emphasized that the Authority "is a state agency" and that all contracts it entered into "should be kept out in the open." And, in admonishing the Authority for approving mileage reimbursement for member use of personal cars at \$.10 per mile rather than a \$.075 rate allowed under state regulations, Odham reminded his colleagues that "as board members, we are a public trust." Thereafter, a motion to charge the smaller amount passed unanimously. Minutes of the 18 November 1955 and 2 December 1955 IACA board meetings. Inter-American Center Authority Minutes 1951-1975, S470. Florida State Archives.

While Interama is constant and permanent in its theme of increased Inter-American cultural and trade exchange, it is to be ever-changing, vigorous, and dynamic in its visual presentation of the progress of the two continents.¹⁴

With Disney-like hyperbole, McDonald proceeded to describe an ever-changing attraction offering ballet, art, sports, drama and other spectacles. Upon completion, INTERAMA would include a festive Latin American village, folklore, and fantasy-lands for children, and the Western hemisphere's largest sub-tropical garden. As Dean MacCannell has pointed out, exposition promoters appreciated not only the economic value of tourism they also sensed tourists' susceptibility to suggestion. Thus, they would never be "independent of a social arrangement wherein a host organizes the experience of a sight-seeing guest."¹⁵ In this instance, visitors would be transported through a system of canals in electric gondolas and pavilions of various nations would display Latin American culture and feature restaurants serving native dishes.

INTERAMA's centerpiece was to be a "Marketplace of the Americas" projected to house exhibits for industry, natural resources, sciences and education, and the humanities. Intended as a permanent trade fair, the "Marketplace" would visually confirm a phenomenon Robert Rydell calls the "equation of abundance and empire."¹⁶ According to Rydell, expositions such as world's fairs seemed to promise a way for the West to partake of foreign cultures without being diminished or fouled by them.¹⁷ The legacy of INTERAMA would be all the more enduring because

14. Transcript of the 3 January 1956 public meeting of the Inter-American Cultural Authority, Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes 1951-1975, S470. Florida State Archives.

15. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Book, 1976), p. 186.

16. Robert Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 18.

17. For an extensive discussion of Florida's participation in world's fairs from Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition to the 1964 New York World's Fair, see Joel M. Hoffman, "From Augustine to Tangerine: Florida at the U.S. World's Fairs," *The Journal of Decorative & Propaganda Arts*, Vol. 23 (1998): 48-85. Hoffman, who devotes a paragraph to INTERAMA, is more generous than Rydell about the overall cultural impact of expositions. For example, he suggests that INTERAMA design-plans conveyed Florida's Spanish-inspired self-identity and demonstrated that Spanish identity could be expressed in modern forms.

it would ostensibly never end. Plans called for a 20% turnover of the park's industrial and commercial exhibits each year in order to enhance variety.

IACA expected to complete financing of the project within two weeks of its January 1956 public announcement. So confident were board members of the deal, they indicated that INTERAMA's first phase would open sometime in 1958. So certain were they of the park's success, they spoke publicly of turning over \$25 million a year to the state of Florida after making bond payments and meeting operating expenses.¹⁸ Optimism notwithstanding, the funding never arrived; in fact, by the time a March closing date had passed, the bond market was entering what would become its least favorable period in 20 years.¹⁹ Almost 40 years later, Brailey Odham recalled that

Bobby Lehman of Lehman Brothers had flown from Miami to Washington with the president of Pan-American Airlines. Lehman outlined the project for him and asked his opinion. He heard a number of objections and reasons why the park wouldn't succeed. Attendance projections, how much people would pay to get in, and how much activity the center would generate began to be questioned. Disneyland had just opened with enormous construction cost overruns and Disney's financial situation was precarious.²⁰

The Disney comparison is interesting for several reasons, the least of which is that Walt Disney himself had personally leveraged everything for his venture, selling real property assets and borrowing against a life insurance policy. More importantly, Disney's park had cost \$17 million (about \$116 million in current dollars)

18. Gene Smith, "Fair May Net Florida \$25,000,000 a Year," *New York Times*, 20 March 1956.

19. Minutes of the 26 April 1957 board meeting of the Inter-American Cultural Authority, Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes, 1951-1975, S470. Florida State Archives.

20. Author's interview with Brailey Odham, 2 April 1994. Odham tendered his resignation as an IACA member after only twenty-one months. His time on the Authority was really a sidebar in his political career. Sincerely committed to the development of INTERAMA, he missed the action and controversy of more public activities. For an in-depth examination of Odham's political career, see Michael Hoover, *Brailey Odham: Florida's Progressive Populist*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Union Institute Graduate School, 1995).

to build, almost twice the original budget of \$9 million. INTERAMA construction was being projected to cost over four times that much money. Additionally, Anaheim's Disneyland sat on 160 acres; INTERAMA would be more than 10 times that size if the Grave's Tract of land was fully developed. Finally, Disney had a television tie-in with the ABC network which had begun broadcasting a family-oriented program entitled *Disneyland* some months prior to the opening of the theme park. Moreover, ABC had agreed to guarantee bank loans used in construction of the park.

Disney quickly recovered from the bad publicity of an opening day fiasco—rides breaking down, plumbing backing up, asphalt still wet, even a gas leak—as millions whose entertainment cravings had been stimulated by the TV show flocked to the Anaheim, California park. Underwriting for INTERAMA, however, appeared less likely with each succeeding IACA board meeting. In a September 1956 letter to Governor LeRoy Collins, Authority Chair Walker appealed for state support, suggesting that the Authority would be unable to function effectively without an infusion of money. At that point, the Authority's five year operation had consisted largely of two state grants totaling \$175,000, donated office space, and a small paid staff after the third year. The following month, as Disneyland was welcoming its five millionth visitor, board member William Lantaff informed his colleagues that INTERAMA's financial package had collapsed.²¹

Phase II: 1960s

The Inter-American Center Authority's inability to procure funds continued in 1957 when a much smaller bond underwriting failed to materialize. By this time, Lantaff had succeeded Walker as board chair, the latter citing health reasons for leaving the position. Thereafter, 1958 was a bad year for Miami; already feeling the economic effects of direct air-service to the Caribbean, a national recession and record cold spell in Florida kept tourists away from the city in droves, pushing a number of hotels into bankruptcy. According to Guillermo Grenier and Alex Stepick, "the Cuban Revolution could not have come at a better time for

21. Minutes of the 26 October 1956 meeting of the Inter-American Cultural Authority. Minutes 1951-1975 S470. Florida State Archives. Originally from New York, Lantaff served as state court judge in Florida, a Florida House of Representatives member, and a U.S. Representative in Congress.

Miami's economy."²² And, in fact, the early 1960s witnessed renewed enthusiasm for INTERAMA.

First, Miami offered to sell the Grave's Tract to the IACA, and on May 13, 1960, the land was conveyed by warranty deed to the Authority for \$8.5 million. The city agreed to waive payment for the purchase until the IACA redeemed the bonds it planned to sell. The city later agreed to put repayment of any federal loans ahead of its claim.

Then, in 1961, former University of Miami Vice-President of Research, Dr. Irving Muskat assumed the IACA chair position from Lantaff.²³ Bringing a great deal of vigor to his leadership role, Muskat presided over several years of forward motion. Among other things, the Authority received the support of President John Kennedy following a summer 1962 meeting arranged by the state's congressional delegation. Kennedy proved particularly interested in the center's potential for furthering objectives of the Alliance for Progress, his program for countering the advance of leftist politics in Latin America with economic development assistance. In December of that year, the president gave his approval to a proposal that Area Redevelopment Administration (ARA) funds be made available for construction of a U.S. government facility at the center as well as for building the pavilions of participating Latin American nations. He further proposed that Congress appropriate the funds for design, construction, and operation of U.S. exhibits at INTERAMA.

By late 1964, the Authority was touting its progress. Dade County had made \$325,000 available for updated design and engineering studies. Further, Florida's Supreme Court had validated a \$21 million bond issue. New York financiers Goodbody & Company had underwritten the bonds, \$8 million of which had been sold with the proceeds being used for site preparation and administrative purposes. Florida's government had pledged up to

22. Guillermo J. Grenier and Alex Serpick III, "Introduction," *Miami Now! Immigration, Ethnicity. And Social Change*, eds., Grenier and Stepick (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), 9.

23. Muskat had previously been associated with the research divisions of Gulf Oil and Pittsburgh Plate Glass, and had been president of two chemical companies. An inventor, he ostensibly had created a non-dent automobile fender. Muskat's 1964 IACA bio indicated that he was "actively engaged in classified work for the United States Government." Inter-American Center Authority, Personnel Files 1955-1975, S478. Florida State Archives.

\$10 million to build access roads to the center's site, as well as roads within the park itself. Design of internal roads was complete, design of external roads had been contracted and work had started, and permission to commence needed dredging in Biscayne Bay had been granted by both the State of Florida Improvement Fund and the U.S. Corps of Engineers. Finally, a core area of 680 acres had been cleared and filled upon which four main areas—international, industrial, cultural/festival, and sports/leisure—would be built.²⁴ With the preliminary work complete Hanes Colbert of the *Miami Herald* wrote that “INTERAMA has come out of the dream world. It is real.”²⁵ Confidence restored, the IACA selected six world renowned architects—Marcel Breuer, Louis Kahn, Paul Rudolph, Jose Luis Sert, Edward Durrell Stone, and Harry Weese to design the first group of INTERAMA pavilions.²⁶

Advances notwithstanding, however, the IACA continued to experience difficulties, many of which were now directly related to drawing the federal government into the matter. A never-released report prepared for President Kennedy by the Commerce and State departments and the U.S. Information Agency apparently offered conflicting assessments regarding INTERAMA's feasibility.²⁷ In any event, the Authority was rebuked by the Alliance for Progress following Kennedy's assassination. Thereafter, “area redevelopment” legislation that included money for the project died in Congress. In the latter instance, the House rejected a Senate version of the bill making any locale eligible for assistance if Cuban refugees numbered at least 50,000 for two years. Only Miami qualified. In desperation, Florida Senators Holland and George Smathers, and U.S. House Representatives Claude Pepper and Dante Fascell, engaged in an intensive lobbying effort to secure a loan from the Community Facilities Administration (CFA). Following some wrangling over whether or not INTERAMA met a

24. “Interama: A Presentation of Its Concept, Financing and Potential Role as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy,” prepared by the Inter-American Center Authority, 12 February 1964.

25. Hanes Colbert, “Interama's Big Step,” *Miami Herald*, 15 November 1964.

26. Paul Einstein, “World's Best: These Six Men Will Design INTERAMA,” 15 April 1965. Durrell was, perhaps, the best known of the six at the time, having done design work for Rockefeller Center and New York's Museum of Modern Art. Weese would later become famous for his design of the Washington, D.C. Metro transit system.

27. Lee Winfrey, “It Was a Long, Hard Pull,” *Miami Herald*, 15 November 1964.

“public works” requirement and a meeting at the White House with Latin American ambassadors, President Lyndon Johnson gave his okay.

The CFA authorized a \$22 million dollar loan for INTERAMA in early 1965; disbursement of funds, however, was contingent upon official U.S. government involvement in the project, and that required both legislative action and presidential signature. A bill before Congress would provide \$15 million to cover construction of a U.S. exhibit and maintenance costs for four years. Despite the endorsement of 228 representatives, criticism was heard in the House from members on both sides of the aisle. During a Foreign Affairs subcommittee hearing, Rep. Peter Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), dismayed by the Authority’s presentation of 15 pounds of printed documents, showed little interest in hearing about construction of the “world’s tallest observation tower” or a “new Disneyland.”²⁸ He repeatedly asked for information to justify the federal expense, which would total \$37 million dollars when the loan proceeds and congressional appropriations were combined.

Similar circumstances prevailed when proceedings moved to the Senate, where 50 members had endorsed the legislation. Foreign Relations Committee Chair William Fulbright (D-AR) said the Community Facilities loan “struck me as a little unusual” given that about 90% of all such lending was made to small towns for water and sewer projects.²⁹ Fulbright apparently bristled at Florida Representative Claude Pepper’s introduction of the IACA’s Muskat as the “George Washington of INTERAMA.” The Senator questioned him sharply on Authority lobbying activities on behalf of the project, even suggesting that the CFA had made an exception for the Inter-American Center Authority after the board had hired a former campaign advance-man for Vice-President Hubert Humphrey to do its bidding.³⁰ After pursuing a similar line of questions, Senator John Williams (R-RI) indicated that he would block passage of any INTERAMA legislation until a full accounting of all lobbying expenses was provided. Williams’ Republican colleague, Senator Bourke Hickenlooper from Iowa, dismissed the

28. Robert Walters, “The Story Behind a Loan,” *Orlando Evening Star*, 10 September 1965.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Julius Duscha, “Building of Fair in Florida Swamp Bogs in Senate,” *Washington Post*, 9 October 1965.

park as a "Chicago Merchandise Mart with some substantial embellishments."³¹ Eventually, the committee sent, on 10-4 vote and absent a recommendation, a \$9.5 million bill to the floor for consideration.³²

Part of INTERAMA's problem was its image, or lack, perhaps, of one. According to critics it was, at worst, a pork barrel project; at best, they viewed it as a job program to get Cuban refugees off the dole. On the other hand, supporters described it variously as an engine of hemispheric economic integration, a major tourist attraction for South Florida, and a cultural bridge between North and South America. The Authority itself prepared a document presenting the park as an "instrument of United States national and foreign policy."³³ Testifying before the House subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, American Foreign Power Company Executive Vice-President Henry Balgooyen highlighted INTERAMA's theme: "The American Way of Life – Progress with Freedom." Pointing out that the Cuba's post-revolutionary Fidel Castro-led government had expropriated—without compensation—\$150 million that his company had invested in the country, Balgooyen spoke of the "extreme difficulty in maintaining profitable private utilities" in Latin America.³⁴ By this time, however, the U.S. State Department was said to oppose the project because there were few Latin American experts involved and because the IACA, after almost 15 years, of existence, had yet to obtain a single firm Latin American commitment to participate in the exposition. Meanwhile a *Wall Street Journal* editorial expressing opposition to the use of federal funds quoted an ardent foe of the project, Senator Frank Lausche (D-OH), "if the project were the financial and cultural bonanza its proponents contend, it would hardly be necessary to ask Washington to finance it."³⁵

31. Walters, op. cit.

32. As reported from the Associated Press, *Orlando Evening Star*, 23 October 1965.

33. "Interama: A Presentation of Its Concept, Financing and Potential Role as an Instrument of United States National and Foreign Policy," Inter-American Center Authority, Publicity Files, S484, Florida State Archives.

34. Henry Balgooyen, "Remarks Before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives," 89th Congress, 26 August 1965, Inter-American Center Authority, Publicity Files, S484, Florida State Archives..

35. "The Good Conscience of Senator Lausche," *Wall Street Journal*, 26 January 1966.

In a display of bravado given the absence of funding for the project, the Miami Chamber of Commerce's 1966 local guide book devoted seven pages to INTERAMA, listing its attributes, including a 1000-foot "Tower of Freedom," a 12,000 seat marine amphitheater with floating stage, and a computerized, automated audio-visual library.³⁶ Claiming that the park would open on July 4, 1968, was, no doubt, wishful thinking, but then Congress passed the \$9.5 million appropriation for INTERAMA.³⁷ While \$5.5 million dollars smaller than proposed, President Lyndon Johnson's signature making the legislation law simultaneously freed up the \$22 million Community Facilities Administration loan. Finally! At last! Construction could begin on the world's first and largest permanent international exposition. Or so proponents thought. Instead, distribution of funds in both accounts was to be withheld until the IACA could "submit persuasive evidence that Latin American governments and U.S. businessmen are serious about becoming exhibitors."³⁸

The Authority also found itself confronted with a new issue. INTERAMA feasibility studies were all based on non-competitive circumstances, but Walt Disney—whom Muskat solicited for the Miami venture—had revealed plans in late 1965 for his own theme park in Central Florida near Orlando. Soon after, cowboy star Roy Rogers announced intentions to build "Western World" in the Orlando area (Rogers' plans were later scrapped). Concerns about a saturated tourist market in the state led the CFA to look again at INTERAMA's potential for success. In addition, the departments of Commerce and State began soliciting the views of domestic business and hemispheric political leaders. Finally, President Johnson's Budget Bureau came out four-square against the project, arguing, first, that government participation in a "permanent fair" could present problems if the "project ran into financial trouble" and, second, that if the Inter-American Center Authority succeeded in "obtaining

36. Michael Lewis, "Don't Let Still-Unrealized Aims Become Our Claims to Fame," *Miami Today*, 9 February 2006.

37. United States Code, Title 22 – Foreign Relations and Intercourse, Chapter 29A – Inter-American Cultural and Trade Center (Public Law 89-355), 19 February 1966.

38. Richard Harwood, "Interama Hits Snag; Loan Held Up by CFA," *Washington Post*, 5 February 1966.

federal funds...other cities...might well seek support for...ventures of the same kind."³⁹

Ignoring the trepidation of his budget staff, Johnson issued an April 1966 proclamation inviting all states and "appropriate" nations of the western hemisphere to participate in INTERAMA (Cuba was excluded). In June of the same year, he signed an executive order "designating the Department of Commerce as the Department through which the United States shall participate in the Inter-American Cultural and Trade Center in Dade County, Florida."⁴⁰ The president's action heartened supporters whose efforts had long ago become a crusade. A *Miami Independent* headline proclaimed: "Start of Interama a Matter of Weeks."⁴¹ Even the *New York Times* echoed the story saying that the project was no longer a fantasy, the reporter repeating the Authority mantra that the grand opening (a now limited one in a select portion of the park) would be on July 4, 1968, even though groundbreaking had yet to take place.⁴²

One of the last remaining hurdles appeared to have been cleared by spring of 1967 as 17 Latin American heads of state committed, in writing, to be represented and eleven of them sent study groups to look at the site and begin considering selection of land parcels upon which to build their pavilions. As it turned out, however, no proceeds would ever be forthcoming from Latin America. The region was experiencing military rule fundamentally different from that to which it had been subject in the past. Prior to this time, the generals took power, established order and returned government to civilian control. But from the 1960s through the early 1980s, the military took power for extended periods, establishing "bureaucratic authoritarian" regimes comprised of the armed forces, public sector administrators, and the business community.⁴³ In most instances the rationale was to subordinate politics to

39. Robert B. Semple Jr., "Johnson Assists Florida Project," *New York Times*, 3 April 1966.

40. EO11286, 10 June 1966. Johnson's order was revoked by a subsequent one (EO 12553, 25 February 1986) signed by President Ronald Reagan more than a decade after the State of Florida had abolished the Inter-American Center Authority. NARA – Federal Register – Executive Order Disposition Tables.

41. *Miami Independent*, 22 September 1966.

42. Gerd Wilke, "Inter-American Trade Center Not Just a Dream," *New York Times*, 25 February 1967.

43. Guillermo O'Donnell coined the term "bureaucratic authoritarianism." See his *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: Institute for International Studies, 1979).

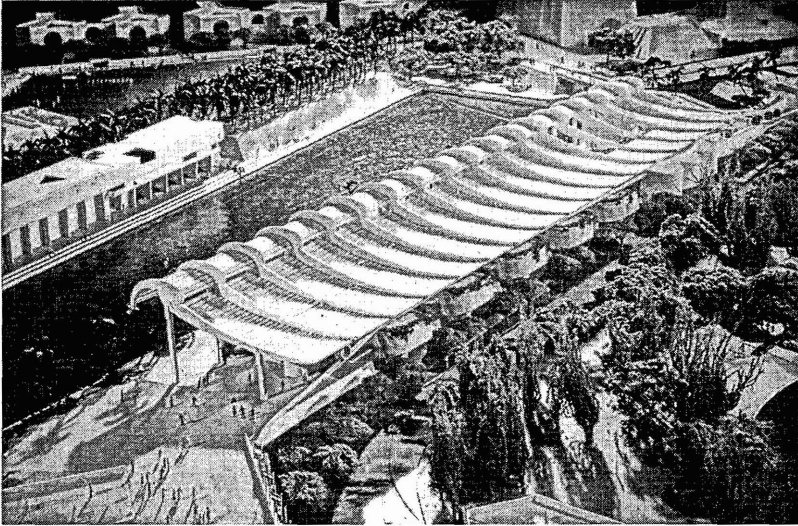
the technical needs of dealing with urgent issues. Most often, this involved eliminating political parties, crushing radical movements, and promoting economic modernization.

Meanwhile, U.S. private-sector disinterest in a project that had grown from an original figure of \$70 million to \$500 million—95% of which INTERAMA backers claimed would be private investment—continued to keep a lid on distribution of federal funds. Significantly, without a show of cash from Washington, D.C., underwriters Goodbody and Company were unwilling to sell any of the remaining \$13 million in bonds. Caught in a downward spiral, the IACA began regularly advancing and discarding ideas in its pursuit of financial backers. Thus, a stadium for the newly-established Miami Dolphins professional football team was on the agenda for a time, only to be replaced by thoughts of an automobile racing track, the track quickly giving way to a marina with berths for 300 yachts, a 200 room luxury hotel, retail shops, a seaplane ramp, customs and immigration facilities, a water transportation fleet, and marine repair service. Neither these nor other trial balloons—a high speed roller coaster, a zoo, and at various times, a symphony and opera hall, ballet and music theater, dramatic arts theater with experimental repertory company, art gallery, and museum—lured investors.

Phase III: The 1970s

July 4, 1968, came and went without INTERAMA, although the Authority did dedicate a “Bridge of the Americas” that was to form the park’s northern entrance in February of that year and contracted with architect Minoru Yamasaki (best known for the World Trade Center) to design the Tower of Freedom complete with observation platforms and restaurants.⁴⁴ The project’s future was again uncertain; Claude Kirk, Florida’s first Republican governor since post-Civil War Reconstruction forced Chair Irving Muskat’s resignation by refusing to fill board vacancies, effectively bring work to a halt in the process. Kirk indicated that he planned to appoint his “own men”—presumably Republicans—to the IACA and that he intended to “call the shots.”

44. “INTERAMA Press Release.” Inter-American Center Authority, 23 February 1968. Inter-America Center Authority, Publicity Files 1964-1974, S484, Florida State Archives.



Model of the proposed Inter-America Trade Center, INTERAMA, Miami. Photograph courtesy of Historical Museum of South Florida Archives.

He eventually named himself Authority chairman.⁴⁵ The governor also issued a broadside against the state's Democratic Party-dominated congressional delegation, claiming that it had failed to "see Washington support through."⁴⁶ The challenge is unlikely to have endeared him to Democratic Party officials who maintained control of those still-unreleased congressional appropriations and federal loans.

In August 1968, IACA Executive Director Gui Govaert asserted that "Unless Miami does something to compete with Disneyland, Disneyworld, and inexpensive vacation trips around the world it is going to lose a lot of visitors. Sand, surf, and sun can tarnish."⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the governor suggested locating the recently established Florida International University (FIU) on INTERAMA property. Several weeks later, with Govaert complaining that the exposition was a "zero sell to private developers unless government

45. "Kirk Picks Kirk Interama Head," *Ft Lauderdale News*, 19 August 1967.

46. "Focus on the US - the South," *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 August 1967.

47. "Build It and They Will Come," *Florida Times Union*, 8 August 1968. Born in Belgium, Govaert immigrated to the U.S. in 1957. He was named INTERAMA executive director and CEO in 1967.

pitches in," the Authority proposed that the state buy a parcel of the Graves' Tract for just that purpose.⁴⁸ The ensuing period was one of inaction as the Florida legislature handed over the Inter-American Center Authority to Metro-Dade County in 1969 and then transferred it back to the state a year later. A 1970 status report issued following return of the project to the state was, to say the least, dire; among other things, the Authority was in default on more than \$27 million of private and public debt, had no financing plans, no construction contracts, no source of income, and was borrowing office space. The \$22 million federal loan had expired, legal proceedings threatened sale of the property, and there were no coordinated efforts between the various government agencies involved. Even the proposed campus for FIU appeared unlikely. In the words of the report itself, "For all practical purposes, the project is at a complete standstill and there is little public confidence."⁴⁹ In contrast, Disney World's 1971 opening was right around the corner.

Two decades of failure and futility did not, however, prevent INTERAMA from coming back, in Phoenix-like fashion, one last time. Authority negotiations with the Rouse Company produced a contract in which the latter agreed to formulate a "Plan for Action" to establish, construct, maintain, operate, and finance the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center.⁵⁰ In early 1972 the company proposed a \$164 million park on 1300 acres; a tower remained the focal point, although it was to be renamed "Tower of the Sun" and was to be built on a 55-acre island located at INTERAMA's center. Called the "Garden of the Sun," the island would recreate "natural, historical, and archeological features of the Americas and Caribbean."⁵¹ Rouse pointed out that the 1965-authorized federal dollars would be necessary during an initial two-year \$34 million phase, after which a \$130 million second phase would be supported by a projected 1974 bond issue. Projections called for 5.3

48. "Interama Asks State to Buy Land Parcel," *Miami Herald*, 15 September 1968.

49. "Status Report of INTERAMA as of July 1, 1970" Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes 1951-1975, S470, Florida State Archives.

50. Minutes of 3 September 1971 Meeting of Interama Authority, Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes 1951-1975, S470, Florida State Archives. Founded by James Rouse, the Rouse Company built some of the first enclosed shopping malls and pioneered development of festival marketplaces such as Bayside Marketplace in Miami.

51. William Jones, "Center Proposed by Rouse," *Washington Post*, 18 February 1972.

million visitors in the first year, less than a third of the original 1950s estimate.

With Rouse later deciding not to proceed with the project, the company's Senior-Vice President William Finley proposed that he "solicit proposals from major corporations" to develop the park. The "emergency nature" of the situation convinced Authority Chair Dr. Elton Gissedanner to hastily convene a board meeting at which Congressman Claude Pepper spoke at length about the precariousness of Washington's continuing commitment.⁵² As Pepper remarked

It's been seven years since we've obtained the appropriations of nearly \$6 million dollars through the Congress, signed by the President, and the commitment of a \$22 million loan from the federal government. Seven years is a rather good long while to hold those funds available for this project as many demands as there are for federal funds. I've said here before this authority that Mr. [John] Rooney [Democrat] of New York, who is chairman of the sub-committee which handles the appropriation of \$6 million, has constantly said to me, "Claude you're never going to do anything with that Rama thing of yours down there. We need this money we want to appropriate it somewhere else."⁵³

Despite misgivings heard from several board members and others in attendance that accepting Finley's offer without competitive bidding was inappropriate for a public entity (and might well be a violation of government contracting procedures), the board voted its approval with only one dissent.

Several months later, an up-dated progress report appeared on the heels of a joint-venture arrangement forged by Finley (operating as Florida-incorporated Finley Development Corporation) and Greene Associates, Inc. (a Maryland-chartered Rouse off-shoot).⁵⁴ INTERAMA's status appeared much improved

52. A veterinarian, Gissedanner had previously served as a state legislator and mayor of North Miami. He would later serve as Director of Florida's Department of Natural Resources for eight years (1979-1987). He resigned after being indicated on bribery charges for which he would be convicted and sent to prison.

53. Minutes of 28 July 1972 Special Meeting of Interama Authority, Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes 1951-1975, S470, Florida State Archives.

54. Minutes of 26 October 1972 Meeting of Interama Authority, Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes 1951-1975, S470, Florida State Archives.

at this time; all debt had been either satisfied, subordinated, or was in the process of being negotiated away. The state had provided \$100,000 of income support to the Authority, there were no existing threats to sell the land, the \$22 million federal loan had been revived, and forty acres of Center land had been transferred to FIU to begin planning and construction. Additionally, the Authority had secured two financial commitments, one from Dade County to support \$12 million in revenue bonds and the other a \$1.8 million pledge from an unnamed private source. The clincher was said to be INTERAMA's designation as a 1976 Bicentennial celebration site (Miami was one of four cities that President Richard Nixon chose to host major events). Soon after, the Authority was queried about its interest in having an Italian-American exposition at the park, the interested party suggesting that it would be a "memorial to his people and a way of undoing their Mafia image."⁵⁵ Ironically, the fact that no Caribbean or Latin American nations had signed on seemed to be lost in what would be a final moment of optimism. Much closer to reality was the failure of presentations to potential Argentine, Brazilian, Canadian, Mexican, and Peruvian "tourist shop" operators to yield any participation, one sticking point being an unsettled matter of whether the stores would be run by individual proprietors or by the Authority.⁵⁶

With disagreement persisting over issues such as the naming of INTERAMA's amusement park (Children's World and Funzania topped the list), calendar year 1974 began with the Authority countering local newspaper reports that it was considering moving the project to Watson Island (located at the western end of Miami Harbor adjacent to the Intra-coastal Waterway, the island was created when ship channels for the adjacent Port of Miami were dug in the early 20th century). An ostensible rationale for the move was accessibility to a larger number of people; Watson Island was included in a proposed mass transit system, the Grave's Tract was not. Media accounts indicated that a relocated INTERAMA would

55. "Memo from L. Nicholas Lutz to William E. Finley." Inter-American Center Authority, Correspondence, 1967-1974, S89, Florida State Archives. Lutz was writing on behalf of a John Capuzelo.

56. Minutes of Regular Meeting, 29 October 1973. Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes 1951-1975, S470, Florida State Archives. At EPCOT's World Showcase, participating country governments would agree to provide funding for ten years, during which time they brought in corporate sponsors for the restaurants and shops.

consist of four attractions—a U.S. pavilion, the amusement area, a cine-sphere, and centerpiece “Pyramid of the Sun” dedicated to and telling the story of the Latin American people—on 65 acres (the island’s acreage totals 86). Anticipated \$57 million building costs were to be paid by a \$22 million Housing and Urban Development loan, a \$5 million grant from the Department of Commerce, and \$15 million each from Dade County and Miami. According to board member and Miami mayor Maurice Ferre, the newspaper stories were incorrect; the Authority had discussed the possibility of a second project were funds to become available.⁵⁷

Things began to unravel quickly even as proponents continued with their huckstering. Seven years earlier, the *New York Times* had “blown INTERAMA’s horn,” now it was the *New York Post*’s turn. In a piece that read as if it had been written by a tourism press agent, Miami Mayor Ferre was quoted saying, “As Tivoli represents Copenhagen and Denmark, Interama will represent our times, customs, and culture in south Florida. There has never been anything quite like it before anyplace in the world.”⁵⁸ While the park’s showcase tower had been scaled-back to either 820 or 850 feet, depending upon the story, hype had it that the structure would be “visible from Ft. Lauderdale to Key Biscayne” and would “become the architectural landmark of Greater Miami.”⁵⁹ In May, with its grand opening slated for the Bicentennial slightly more than two years away, INTERAMA’s first phase construction costs were being projected at \$120 million. Two months later, the Authority was confronted with an eerily familiar scenario when board members were advised that rising interest rates, the nature of the project, and the nation’s unsteady economy made a bond issue impossible to sell.⁶⁰ Then, in October, the contract with Finley-Greene was cancelled since the venture could not go forward without financing.⁶¹

57. Minutes of Regular Meeting, 24 January 1974, Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes 1951-1975, S470, Florida State Archives.

58. “Miami Gets Ready for Interama Cultural Center,” *New York Post*, 5 March 1974. Copenhagen’s Tivoli Gardens amusement park has been in operation since 1843. The attraction includes a faux-village built in Chinese architectural style, mechanical rides, restaurants and cafes, floral gardens, and a theater.

59. *Engineering News Record*, 28 March 1974; *Nation’s Restaurant News*, 13 May 1974.

60. “Interama Staff Reduced by Half,” *Miami News*, 13 July 1974.

61. Regular Meeting Minutes, 28 October 1974, Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes 1951-1975, S470, Florida State Archives.

The Inter-American Center Authority met for its final time in June 1975. One item on the Board's last-ever agenda was a note from U.S. Rep. Claude Pepper stating that the Commerce Department had cancelled a \$5 million award. Revocation of the grant stemmed from the Florida legislature abolishing the IACA as an "instrumentality of the State of Florida" during its spring session of that year. Sponsored by House member Elaine Bloom and State Senator Bob Graham (both of whom were Dade County Democrats), the legislation that Governor Rubin Askew signed provided for appropriations of \$6.5 million to satisfy existing private debt obligations.⁶² Authority Chair Elton Gissendanner read a statement indicating that the statute supporting the board's continuation had been repealed. After thanking members for their service, Gissendanner remarked "All right. The meeting is adjourned."

Conclusion

Twenty-five years of effort by a variety of business and government leaders did not generate the financing and participation needed to make INTERAMA a reality. Their failure appears to have been matched by public indifference. If nothing else, continually changing what the park was supposed to be in pursuit of federal backing perpetuated public confusion about its purpose and rationale. In South Florida, proverbial person-in-the-street interviews asking about INTERAMA might well have produced multiple descriptions. Elsewhere, such questions could have resulted in blank stares; among those I queried—in a, by no means, social scientific way—several long-time residents of Florida remarked that they remembered "something" but they were unable to refer to anything specific. One person who grew up in Miami during the era said "I remember hearing about Interama quite a bit in the [Miami] *Herald*, though its location was never clear to me."⁶³

The above individual left Miami in 1975, the year of the INTERAMA project's demise. By that time, portions of the 1750 acre Grave's Tract were already being developed for other purposes. Florida International University's North Campus, now called Biscayne Bay Campus, was nearing a 1977 opening. Meanwhile,

62. Minutes of Regular Meeting: Final Meeting, 9 June 1975, Inter-American Center Authority, Minutes 1951-1975, S470, Florida State Archives.

63. Author's interview with Susan Dooley, 29 April 2006.

the city of North Miami thought that it was getting two golf courses, tennis courts, and a multi-purpose clubhouse on 350 acres that it had bought from the IACA in 1972. Municipal Sports, Inc. was to have built the Munisport complex at no cost to the city in exchange for a permit to operate a landfill on some of the property.⁶⁴ Part of the plan called for the company to use the fill they collected to create rolling hills for the golf courses. Municipal Sports, Inc. declared bankruptcy in 1981, leaving the city with a toxic mess that would remain on the Environmental Protection Agency's list of Superfund sites for sixteen years (1983-1999). Interestingly, the buried drums of contaminated trash and infectious medical waste were preceded by the "filling of low-lying wetland areas with construction debris and solid waste in an effort to raise the elevation of the land for the construction of a cultural and trace center known as Interama."⁶⁵ At present the one-time landfill site is being developed as a high-end, mixed-used commercial and residential "community" to be known as Biscayne Landings. As for INTERAMA's remaining acreage, the State of Florida opened Oleta State Park in 1986. At over 1000 acres it is the state's largest urban park.

We'll never if know if the 1968 newspaper headline about INTERAMA reading "Build It and They Will Come" was correct. Therefore, we can't say whether or not the park might have contributed to Miami maintaining dominance of Florida tourism, something that Disney World ended for good. But failure to realize INTERAMA did not deter the city from experiencing a renaissance since the project's demise (continuing inequitable distribution of benefits and ethnic and racial disparities notwithstanding). With links throughout the Caribbean and the Americas, Miami's revival has basically transformed it into the "gateway" and "hub" that its promoters have always envisioned. It is a place where the social and political effects of large-scale contemporary population movements are plain to see, the city becoming in the process a financial metropolis with significant economic as well as cultural influence.

64. Lewis, op cit.; Michael Vasquez, "North Miami Debates Future of Munisport Development Site After Years of Delay," *Miami Herald*, 15 April 2002.

65. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Notice of Intent to delete the Munisport Landfill Superfund Site from the National Priorities List (NPL)," *Federal Register*, 25 June 999 (Vol. 64, No, 122).

Coda: INTERAMA Redux?

Fifty years ago, persons pushing the Inter-American Cultural and Trade Center intended for it to be, at least in part, a statement that Miami was looking outward and to the future, that it was vibrant, had an edge, and was aggressively international. Today, a similar attitude pervades those pushing to have the city selected as the site of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) operations center. In fact, the current endeavor looks strikingly familiar; business and government elites are spearheading efforts (in the form of a non-profit corporation this time rather than a public agency). Plans call for construction and operating costs to be largely underwritten by local, state, and federal dollars (with the promise of private sector investment). Unanimous resolutions of support passed in both houses of Congress and former Florida governor and Miami resident Jeb Bush, who said that securing the permanent secretariat for the city was one his most important goals, traveled to several Latin American countries seeking support. To top it off, selection of the FTAA headquarters host city, intended for 2005, was still up in the air as the year 2007 came to a close.